

C. REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-14, 16-22, 24-29, 31-36, 38, and 39 are currently pending. Claims 3, 9, 15, 23, 30, 37 and 40-54 are canceled. Claims 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31, 33, 35, 36, and 38 are amended.

Drawings

The Office Action does not indicate whether the drawings submitted on November 20, 2003 are accepted. Applicants respectfully request that in any next action, the Examiner indicate that the drawings are accepted or provide Applicants with an opportunity to submit substitute drawings, should the Examiner object to the drawings.

Currently Pending Claims Presented in a Condition for Allowance

The Office Action rejects claims 1-2, 4, 7-8, 10, 12-14, 16, 19-22, 24-29, 31-36, and 38-54 under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Lahutsky (US Publication 2004/0047456). [Office Action, p. 2] In addition, the Office Action rejects claims 1, 7, 13, 19, 26, 33, 40, 43, 46, 49, 50, 51, and 52 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Conrad (US Patent 4,304,963) in view of Well Known Prior Art and as being unpatentable over Chambers et al. (US Patent 4,527,015) in view of Well Known Prior Art. [Office Action, pp. 5, 6] Further, the Office Action rejects claims 5-6, 11, and 17-18 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lahutsky in view of Heep (US Patent 4,996,709). [Office Action, p. 7]

In addition, however, the Office Action states that claims 3, 9, 15, 23, 30, and 37 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. [Office Action, p. 7]

Regardless of whether the Examiner's previous rejections are true, Applicants amend claims 1, 7, 13, 19, 26, and 33, to incorporate, respectively, the allowable subject matter of dependent claims 3, 9, 15, 23, 30, and 37. Therefore, claims 1, 7, 13, 19, 26, and 33 are now allowable as the independent form, including base claims, of allowable claims 3, 9, 15, 23, 30, and 37. In view of the amendments to claims 1, 7, 13, 19, 26, and 33 to incorporate allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections and allowable of claims 1, 7, 13, 19, 26, and 33. In addition, Applicants respectfully request allowable of claims 2, 4-6, 8, 10-14, 16-18, 20-22, 24, 25, 27-29, 31,32, 34-36, 38, and 39 as dependent claims of allowable independent claims 1, 7, 13, 19, 26, and 33.

Applicants note that claims 40-54, which stand rejected, are cancelled. Therefore, in view of the amendments to the claims to incorporate allowable subject matter and the cancellation of claims 40-54, the present application is pending with only allowable claims and Applicants respectfully request a timely issuance of a notice of allowance.

Conclusion

Applicants have amended claims 1, 2, 4-8, 10-14, 16-22, 24-29, 31-36, 38, and 39 to overcome the rejection of the claims under 35 USC 102(e) and 35 USC 103(a) and have canceled claims 40-54. Therefore, no grounds of rejection remain applicable in view of the amendments. In view of the foregoing, withdrawal of the rejections and the allowance of the current pending claims are respectfully requested. If the Examiner feels that the pending claims could be allowed with minor changes, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned to discuss an Examiner's Amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

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